

AROUND THE WORLD . . .

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4A USA Today

SOVIET NUCLEAR TEST:

The Soviet Union conducted an underground nuclear blast Wednesday at its test site in Semipalatinsk in central Asia, the first ever to be directly monitored by U.S. scientists on Soviet territory.

SOLIDARITY MEETING: Solidarity leader Lech Walesa and a government minister meet today to prepare for round-table talks between officials and opposition leaders aimed at ending Poland's crisis, the government said.

DISPUTES CHARGE: Confessed hijacker Mohammed Ali Hamadi denied that he led the 1985 TWA hijacking that claimed the life of a U.S. Navy diver and held 39 Americans for 17 days.

SPANNING THE GLOBE: PLO leader Yasser Arafat wished Israel "Happy New Year" in Hebrew, but Israeli officials dismissed it as a public relations ploy. ... Masked men killed a Palestinian and dumped his body in Nablus in the West Bank, the seventh

RANSOM REPORTED PAID FOR HOSTAGE RELEASE

A \$22.2 million ransom was believed paid to win the release of West German Rudolf Cordes from his captors in Lebanon, a West German newspaper reported Wednesday.

Despite strong denials by his employer and government officials, the daily *Bild* said the money was deposited into Arabian bank accounts to secure Cordes' freedom.

He arrived home Tuesday after 20 months of captivity by pro-Iranian Shiite Moslems.

Said Wolfgang Schaeuble, who heads West Germany's Middle East crisis group: "There were no



Reuters

CORDES: Employer, government deny story

deals. There were no conditions."

Stern magazine said Cordes' employer paid a private detective to deliver the ransom money.

slaying in three weeks of an Arab suspected of collaborating with Israel.

AND IN KENYA: Thinking about a little illegal elephant

hunting? Forget it, says President Daniel arap Moi, who ordered park rangers to shoot poachers on sight. Goal: protect declining elephant herds.